



Storm Water Permit Requirements for Oil/Water Separators

Water Protection Program technical bulletin

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Oil/water separators are mechanical wastewater treatment devices that remove oily and greasy contaminants from process or storm water runoff. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has prepared a general permit for the discharge from these devices, but it is the responsibility of the individual owner of a separator to apply for the permit.

Oil/water separators are used at sites in the following ways:

1. The separator can be connected to a sanitary sewer system owned by a city or other public entity.
The city, or whoever runs the sewer system, should be informed about the separator and may have requirements. The department does not require permits for separators connected to sanitary sewers.
2. The separator can be connected to a "no discharge" type wastewater treatment system (septic tank and drain field).
For businesses, this type of wastewater treatment system construction must be reviewed through the department's construction permitting system. The department does not require permits for septic tank systems once constructed, but the department does regulate other types of "no discharge" systems such as land application of wastewater. If a wastewater contains much oily material, a separator can extend the usable life of a "no discharge" system and will allow more efficient operation. The drain field will be less likely to plug and backup; greases will be slow to break down biologically. However, the department would not necessarily require separators to be a part of such systems.
3. The separator treats process wastewater not a result of storm water and discharges to the environment. The department requires site-specific permits for this situation. A general permit is not available. Wash water is a process wastewater.
4. The separator discharges directly to the environment and the separator is treating storm water that falls on outdoor areas.

The purpose of this bulletin is to discuss permit requirements for oil/water separators used in this last manner.

Who Needs a Permit?

The permit applies to establishments such as service stations, truck stops, vehicle repair shops, body repair shops, parking garages, retail store parking lots and similar sites that control oil and greases associated with vehicle parking, repair or fueling. Facilities that voluntarily install an oil/water separator are exempt from permit requirements. This exemption does not apply to facilities that are required by Federal or State regulations to install the oil/water separator, or to facilities found by the department to be causing a water quality impact."

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The permit is not appropriate for industries covered under Storm Water Regulations, such as manufacturing plants, truck terminals, and vehicle salvage yards. These establishments should apply for an industry-specific general storm water permit, whether they have a separator or not, which would cover discharges including those from any separators.

Background

Since the Clean Water Act of 1972, discharges of treated wastewater have been permitted through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Since 1974, Missouri has been delegated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to issue NPDES permits. The permits issued by the department are state as well as federal operating permits. Any discharge of waters by industry to the environment are covered by regulations under the Clean Water Law and a permit is required unless there is a specific exemption.

Exemptions

Holders of the general permit for storm water oil/water separators may be exempted from obtaining a construction permit for the oil/water separator.

General Permit Requirements

The permit requires that the discharge from separators does not violate Missouri water quality standards. Annual sampling and testing of the discharged water is required.

A maintenance schedule must be used by the owner/operator of the separator and records of the maintenance kept. Usually problems in the past have been the result of undersized and inadequately maintained separators. The oil and grease caught by the separator must be removed in a timely manner so that the next storm loading does not wash out the accumulated sludge.

Site Specific Permits

If requested by the owner or operator, a facility may be covered by a general permit. A site-specific permit takes into account the individual characteristics of the site and the storm water runoff. In addition, the department can determine that the quality of waters of the state may be better protected by requiring the owner/operator of the site to apply for a site-specific permit.

Fees and Application Forms

To apply under a general permit, complete application Form E and submit a fee of \$150. The fee is paid only on application. The general permit will expire on Oct. 8, 2008, at which time the application will need to be made to renew the facility permit.

To apply for a site-specific permit for a separator that treats process wastewater, complete application forms A and C and submit a fee of \$1,500.

For more information on water pollution control permits and water discharges

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Water Protection Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
1-800-361-4827 or (573) 751-1300 office
(573) 526-1146 fax
www.dnr.mo.gov/wpscd/wpcp